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**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOEL HEFLEY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND FACILITIES**

**NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1999
DIVISION B—MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AUTHORIZATIONS**

April 29, 1998

This afternoon, the Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities meets to consider the authorizations for the military construction and military family housing programs of the Department of Defense and related items. The legislation we will consider today will be incorporated into division B of the H.R. 3616, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999. At the appropriate time, I will open the mark to amendment at any point. First, however, I want to make a few observations.

This subcommittee continues to be deeply concerned about the serious shortfalls in basic infrastructure, military housing, and other facilities that effect the readiness and training of the armed forces and the quality of life for military personnel and their families. The budget requested by the Administration for FY1999 continued a pattern of significant deterioration in the funding programmed by the Department of Defense for military construction. Overall, the Administration proposed seven percent less for the military construction accounts than one year ago and 15 percent less than the program authorized by Congress. By now, the pattern is all too familiar to this subcommittee.

Since the FY1996 budget request, the Department of Defense has taken nearly \$3.0 billion – or 27 percent – out of the programmed level for military construction and military family housing. In constant dollars, the Administration's FY1999 program would, if adopted by this subcommittee, cut over one-third of the buying power in the military construction accounts from the level Congress authorized for FY1996. In spite of the significant resources Congress has applied to the very real needs of the military services in basic infrastructure, training facilities, and military housing, and to improve basic working conditions and safety on military installations, the budget continues to erode faster than this subcommittee can keep up.

Yet, the military services continue to provide testimony and other evidence that their needs are not being met adequately by the Administration's program. Based on the record, it is clear that the construction programs of the services would need to be at least twice as large as they currently are to begin to address the backlog of serious shortfalls in facilities. The evidence that antiquated, obsolete, overused, and inadequate facilities and military housing are an impediment to effective training and readiness and to the assurance of a decent quality of life for military personnel is clear to anyone who would care to examine the record built by this subcommittee.

Earlier this year, in response to a question from Chairman Spence about their unfunded requirements, the service chiefs provided a list of shortfalls across the broad spectrum of need. The unfunded MILCON requirement identified by the chiefs is \$7.6 billion.

The recommendations contained in the chairman's mark will help alleviate a portion of the backlog and critical shortfalls. It does not go as far as I would like. The fiscal constraints faced by this committee prevent this subcommittee from providing as much in the way of additional resources as we have over the past three years. The mark contains an additional \$450 million in added funding for military construction and military family housing, which would permit us to buy back about one-third of the Administration's \$1.4 billion cut to the MILCON topline. Given the condition of facilities and the needs identified by the services, it is not enough, but I believe we will make good use of these limited funds.

The recommendations before the subcommittee, which have the full support of Mr. Abercrombie, would provide an additional \$183 million for quality-of-life enhancements. Those funds would provide additional military family housing, troop housing, child development centers, fitness centers, and other community support facilities that are integral to the support of military personnel and their families. In addition, the mark would provide additional funding for military construction to support the training, readiness, and maintenance requirements of the active and reserve components.

Before I yield, I want draw attention to a legislative provision that I believe is particularly noteworthy. As members know, last year, this subcommittee helped to reauthorize the Sikes Act. The mark proposes an amendment to the Sikes Act to encourage the Department of Defense to expand opportunities for sportsmen with disabilities to hunt and fish on military installations. Currently, the military departments manage over 30 million acres of wildlands and, where consistent with the military mission, manage a portion of those lands for recreational sporting use. At Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Virginia, the Marine Corps operates one of the most successful programs that makes those recreational activities available to veterans, military dependents with disabilities, as well as other sportsmen with disabilities. This legislation would provide for an expansion of those programs and enable the military departments to accept donations of funds and material to support these programs. Our former colleague on the full committee, Duke Cunningham, has led this effort. It has broad bipartisan support and it merits the support of the subcommittee.